

"ASHWOOD"  
208 Ashwood Road  
Villanova  
Radnor Township  
Delaware County  
Pennsylvania

HABS NO. PA-194

HABS  
PA  
23-VILLA  
1-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Eastern Office, Division of Design and Construction  
120 South Third Street  
Philadelphia 6, Pennsylvania

## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

## "ASHWOOD"

Street Address: 208 Ashwood Road, Villanova, Radnor Township,  
Delaware County, Pennsylvania

Present Owner: G. Clinton Jones, IV, same address.

Present Occupant: Owner

Present Use: Residence

Brief Statement  
of Significance: This eighteenth-century farmhouse, with nineteenth-century additions, is a large, dignified but plain suburban residence.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

## A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners: If the year 1723 is the correct date for the building of this house, then the first occupant was Margaret Jarman (died 1740), the Penn patentee of 1701. Subsequent owners are as follows:
 

1740-1758	John Jarman
1758-1771	Lewis Jarman
1771-1796	John Bewley
1796-1831	Peter Penn-Gaskell
1831- ?	Peter Penn-Gaskell, Jr.
Later	Colonel Peter Penn-Gaskell Hall
1888- ?	Dr. Charles DaCosta
Recently	Dr. Williams B. Cadwalader
1957	Purchased by present owner

References: Property and chain of title from 1701-1796 all given in Delaware County Deed Book C, p. 285, upon the purchase by Peter Penn-Gaskell in 1796. See also Joshua W. Ash, Map of Delaware County, Pa. (Philadelphia, 1848); Ellis Kiser, Otto Barthel and St. J. Ogier, comps., Atlas of Properties on Line of Pennsylvania R.R. From Rosemont to West Chester (Philadelphia, 1897). Upon purchase of the property by Dr. DaCosta in 1888, Ashwood became a tenant house on the land, and DaCosta built a large stone mansion further up the hill, to which he gave the old name of Ashwood.

2. Date of erection: 1723, according to inscription on watercolour of 1888 mentioned under item 6 of this section. The house was, at any rate, specifically mentioned in the 1771 Deed. Additions to the house were erected in the nineteenth century.

3. Architect, builder, suppliers etc.: No information.
4. Original plans, construction etc.: No information.
5. Notes on alterations and additions: No information.
6. Important old views and references: Watercolour of house made in 1888 by Eugene Castello, is at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 1300 Locust Street, Philadelphia (#ARP.06). It was then covered with tan-pink stucco. Castello also painted in 1888, a structure identified on the watercolour as "Old House on Col. Hall's Place, Ashwood, Upton. The windows were taxed at that time. Built about 1680 by the Swedes over a spring." (Historical Society of Pennsylvania #ARP.059). (This may be the existing springhouse.)

B. Historical Events Connected with the Structure:

John Jarman, Jr., born 1684, who inherited the land (and presumably the house which his son later occupied) was the first male child of European parents born in Radnor Township; in 1722 he published An Ephemeris for the Year 1722, an almanac printed in Philadelphia by Andrew Bradford - of course before he came into the Ashwood property; was one of the earliest mathematicians and astronomers in the Colonies (Priscilla Walker Streets, Lewis Walker of Chester Valley and His Descendants, Philadelphia, 1896, pp. 70-73; Henry Graham Ashmead, History of Delaware County, Pa., Philadelphia, 1884, p. 678.)

Peter Penn-Gaskell (1764-1831) came to Pennsylvania about 1785 as chief representative of the Penn family to claim Proprietary lands forfeited during Revolution; married Elizabeth Edwards in 1793 at Old St. David's Church, Radnor, and purchased Ashwood in 1796. He and his wife and all of their children were painted by Thomas Sully. They are buried nearby in Lower Merion Baptist Churchyard. (Catalogue of the Memorial Exhibition of Portraits by Thomas Sully, Philadelphia: The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, 1922, p. 28.)

- C. Likely Sources Not Yet Investigated: Penn-Gaskell family papers, some at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, some owned by William Penn-Gaskell Hall, Paoli, Pa.

Prepared by F. J. Dalton Date June 1958

For Radnor Historical Society

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

## A. General Statement:

1. Architectural Character: This is an example of an early Pennsylvania stone farmhouse, but there have been extensive additions.
2. Condition of Fabric: Good. Maintained as a private residence.

## B. Technical Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: Not recorded.
2. Foundations: Fieldstone
3. Wall construction: Stone covered with stucco and white-washed. Second story rear bedroom extension of frame over extended dining room and extended parlor with porch, all of nineteenth-century origin.
4. Porches: No information.
5. Chimneys: Two original chimneys, one rising from present parlor to left of front door and entrance hall and one rising from present library to right of entrance hall (the two original rooms).
6. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: Panelled doors of both wood and glass, probably all replacements.
  - b. Windows and shutters: Small pane, double-hung, sash windows, probably all replacements. Outside shutters throughout house, probably all replacements.
7. Roof
  - a. Shape, covering: The north-east is hipped while the south-west is gabled. Wood shingles are used.
  - b. Cornice, eaves: The continuous wooden cornice with small dentil trim and wooden band beneath it extends on the gable ends up along roofline to peak.
  - c. Dormers: One-light-deep attic dormers of recent date on front and rear.

## C. Technical Description of Interiors:

## 1. Floor plans:

First Floor: Center hall, large parlor to left; five other rooms to right (not including lavatory)

Second Floor: Eight rooms (not including baths)

Late in nineteenth century the kitchen wing in present form was introduced and at an indeterminate date the parlor made into one large room and a porch added to it in rear. Second story rear bedroom extension of frame over the dining room was probably also late nineteenth-century work.

2. Stairways: Principal stairway rises from center hall. Service stairway from kitchen to second floor rear hall.
3. Flooring: Only original wide-board flooring is in master bedroom over parlor. Hardwood flooring elsewhere in house is modern.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Plain plastered walls, painted. Dining room and library have inferior nineteenth-century wooden strip vertical panelling on walls. Mantels are largely original, handcarved, with fluting and side pilasters in design.
5. Doorways and doors: Simple door trim of inscribed circles at each end of lintels. Four and six panel doors, some perhaps original.
6. Trim: Simple. Panelled reveals on all windows.
7. Hardware: Very little original. Mostly of inferior nineteenth-century installation.
8. Lighting: Electricity.
9. Heating: Fireplaces in parlor and library and bedrooms above them on second floor. They have old cast-iron ornamented firebacks, probably late nineteenth century. Central heating. Gas stove in kitchen.

## D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: Hillside, heavily wooded in old shade. The building faces south-east.
2. Enclosures: Privet hedges.
3. Outbuildings: Old springhouse of stone. Detached two-car garage, modern, with apartment above. Log shed for garden tools.

4. Walks: None of interest.
5. Landscaping, gardens etc.: Rolling lawn, native trees, flower beds, profuse but unpretentious.

Prepared by F. J. Dallett Date June 1958

For Radnor Historical Society